

CC Remains A Distinctive Volkswagen

Ann M. Job, For The Associated Press

Volkswagen's upscale CC compact sedan is nicely put together with a coupe silhouette, pretty lines, a taut, refined ride, well-crafted interior and for 2013, seats for five.

In response to dealer and customer feedback, VW removed the two rear bucket seats, with console between, and replaced them with a padded and sculpted bench seat that has a resting spot and seat belt for a middle passenger.

It's the first time since the CC debuted in the in the 2009 model year that the car has the traditional five-seat configuration of other sedans. In , a five-seat option was already offered.

Further changes for 2013 include restyled front and rear with standard bi-Xenon high-intensity discharge headlamps that swivel up to 15 degrees as the car goes through corners. The 2013 CC also gets light-emitting diodes for its taillamps and license plate illumination.

The interior is upgraded, too, with new head restraints that can adjust fore and aft and automatic climate control with humidity sensor that helps keep window glass free of condensation.

Best of all, the CC comes with free scheduled maintenance for three years or 36,000 miles, whichever comes first. This Carefree Maintenance Program is on all new VWs.

CC pricing rises slightly from the 2012 model year. Starting manufacturer's suggested retail price, including destination charge, for a base 2013 CC Sport is \$31,435 with manual transmission and \$32,535 with dual-clutch automatic. The base CC comes with a 200-horsepower, turbocharged, direct-injection, gasoline four cylinder.

A 280-horsepower gasoline V-6 is available on the upper level Executive model that starts at \$42,245. It comes with automatic transmission and all-wheel drive. Note: All-wheel drive is only offered on the V-6-powered CC.

Competitors to the CC include other upscale, front-wheel drive, compact sedans with four-cylinder engines, such as the 2013 Acura TSX, which has a starting MSRP plus destination charge of \$31,405 and base, 201-horsepower powerplant.

Meantime, the 2013 Buick Verano sedan has a starting retail price of \$23,965 with 180-horsepower, four-cylinder engine and automatic transmission. The base four cylinders of the ILX and Verano are not turbocharged. But later in the 2013 model year, the Verano will add a 250-horsepower, turbo four cylinder.

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Published on Industrial Maintenance & Plant Operation (<http://www.impomag.com>)

Neither Acura nor Buick includes free scheduled maintenance.

The CC started life as a VW with standout aesthetics, and the distinctive styling continues with the new hood, grille, lights and bumpers. The sides now have more prominently sculpted lower sills, and the CC looks somewhat low to the ground.

In fact, it is shorter in overall height than the TSX and Verano, and passengers set down a bit onto the seats, which means there's no good way to look over or around taller vehicles.

From the start, VW touted the CC as an affordable "four-door coupe," and certainly, it's less pricey than the Mercedes-Benz CLS "four-door coupe" that starts at more than \$70,000 for 2013.

The CC also has a coupe's kind of doors — frameless.

But Americans bought just 29,502 CCs last calendar year.

The test CC, a base model with six-speed manual transmission, handled emergency maneuvers as well as day-to-day driving with confidence and composure. Highway travel was pleasant, too.

The test car rode with its 15.75-foot-long body well-controlled and tamped down over road bumps.

There was never any wallowy or loose feel in the CC motions. And, most road bumps were well-managed below the car, leaving passengers to feel mostly mild vibrations. Only over sustained broken pavement did the ride feel busy.

Electric, power-assisted, rack-and-pinion steering has variable speed assist, so steering had a consistent feel. The driver always had a palpable sense that the test CC was well connected to the road.

The CC seemed to slice through air without wind noise. There was a bit of road noise from the 17-inch, all-season tires.

Shoppers may not expect a six-speed manual in a sedan, but it's in the CC for those who want it. The shifting had a bit of a loose, rubbery feel, and the clutch pedal didn't take a lot of effort and engaged the clutch quickly.

The test car had some lag at startup, evidently from the turbo, but once the turbo got going, the forceful grunt pulled the car strongly. Peak torque of 207 foot-pounds in this 3,300-pound car comes on at a low 1,700 rpm.

VW recommends premium gasoline for top performance, and the test car's fuel economy of nearly 24 miles per gallon in 70 percent city driving and 30 percent highway driving did not impress. Still, with a sizable gas tank capable of holding 18.5 gallons, the test CC had a range of 440 miles.

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The CC tank is 18.6 percent larger than that of the Verano, which has the same federal government fuel economy rating as the CC with manual — 21/32 mpg.

The CC's rear-seat legroom of 37.3 inches is more than what's measured in the TSX and Verano.

But the CC's sloping roofline requires some "ducking" to get inside and restricts back-seat headroom. It's measured at 36.6 inches without a sunroof, which is less than the Verano and TSX with sunroof.

By the way, a sunroof is available only on the top CC models that start at \$36,180. In comparison, the TSX has a standard moonroof.

The TSX also has standard leather-trimmed seats, while the CC has standard leatherette seat trim in all but the \$42,245 Executive model. Other restrictions in CC amenities seem off-putting, too. The pricey Executive model is the only one with rearview camera.

Consumer Reports lists CC reliability as below average.

Source URL (retrieved on 12/18/2014 - 12:40pm):

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